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### WRITTEN EVIDENCE TO THE CORPORATE SERVICES POC REVIEW OF COMMUNITY COHESION FROM THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS SERVICE

#### Introduction

The Committee has asked that Corporate Communications provide information on two areas:

1. How Corporate Communications promotes services to all residents in the borough
2. How Corporate Communications is keeping hard to reach groups informed to help promote integration and cohesion

#### 1. Communicating with residents

Corporate Communications role is to help increase public and other stakeholder understanding of the services and policies of the Council. This is done in three key ways:

**Core activities** - including media relations, publications (such as Hillingdon People), corporate branding, marketing (leaflets, posters and displays) and digital media.

**Campaigns** – these are linked to key service priorities and range from fully integrated campaigns (which includes some or all of the above) to event-based or public information campaigns.

**Consultation and engagement** – to help us understand current residents' views, satisfaction levels and thinking on specific policy issues or services.

Examples include the annual residents' survey or the recent consultation on changes to council tax benefits.

#### 2. Engaging with hard to reach groups

We work hard to ensure we are communicating effectively with all our communities, helping to ensure integration and cohesion. Below are some examples of how we are engaging with individuals from different backgrounds and hard to reach groups, either through our day-to-day activities or targeted projects.

##### *Hillingdon People*

Our residents' magazine is published six times a year and distributed door-to-door to all of the borough's 113,000 households as well as libraries, leisure centres, nursing homes and public buildings to ensure everyone in the borough is kept well informed about the council's services.

Large print and audio versions are also produced and delivered to residents requesting these services. For those that would prefer to read HP online we

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publish a PDF and digital version. We use plain English and adhere to Royal National Institute of Blind People guidelines to ensure wide accessibility.

Finally, each edition carries a contacts list for key council services so that residents have a ready reference for information.

### *Web and digital media*

We have recently overhauled the website with improved design, navigation, functionality and content to deliver a first class customer service. The site is DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) and Equality Act 2010 compliant and meets the accessibility guidelines issued by the Worldwide Web Consortium.

Over 40,000 residents are registered to report or request information online, which is a sizeable proportion of our population. In rolling out the self-service option we have been monitoring take up from across communities and it reflects the profile of the borough well. To further improve accessibility a mobile version of the website will be launched at the end of November. We also have a Young Hillingdon version of the website, and get the Youth Council involved in making decisions for the site.

Residents of all ages follow the council using social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, which we use to explain, warn and inform – as well as encourage residents to get involved in consultations.

### *Campaigns and marketing*

We produce a wide range of marketing materials including posters and leaflets for services and events for older people and those with disabilities. We support programmes for younger people such as FIESTA and the Kids in Care Awards and extensive campaigns for fostering and adoption to support children in need.

The majority of our priority one campaigns are aimed at all residents and care is taken to ensure inclusion regardless of age, social background, gender, disability, ethnicity and sexuality. Recent examples include the council's anti-social behaviour (ASB) campaign which had the potential to unfairly feature young people as the main perpetrators of ASB and to reinforce negative stereotypes. It was also important to ensure that older people weren't featured as the primary target of ASB as is often portrayed in the media. A campaign was therefore created using non age or gender specific characters instead of people and articles featured residents of all ages a backgrounds.

Change 4Life Hillingdon and Feel PROUD campaigns were also targeted at all residents and featured residents of all ages highlighting the campaign through their own unique perspectives to help all residents identify with the campaign.

All campaign and marketing work is designed to be accessible by the widest possible range of residents and we work hard with departments where specific tailoring is needed to meet specific residents' service needs. This approach is also adopted in service areas that reach out to all residents such

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as our libraries and care is taken to ensure that these outlets are used as key communication channels.

### *Branding*

The council's branding guidelines call for all communications to be as clear and easy to understand as possible. Signage is designed to be uncluttered with a simple point of contact online or by telephone. We consider the needs of visually impaired residents with DDA compliant signs where appropriate.